

Editors' Foreword

Dear Readers,

After prolonged and mostly inexplicable delays, the first issue of fourth volume of Jindal Journal of Public Policy is being published. This volume comes at this current juncture when the entire world is facing the consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic. The heart wrenching scenes of migrant labourers limping back to their native lands, either walking hundreds of miles or somehow finding a place in packed trucks and trains have exposed the underbelly of society, and have shaken our collective conscience. Many have argued that things in the post-Covid world may not go back to how they were in the old days. Some have asserted that radical changes are due and the era of neo-liberal dominance over public policies around the world should give way to a more holistic and inclusive paradigm. As the world debates whether it is possible that we can come out of the crisis and if we do so, how the post-covid world would look like, this volume is an attempt to look back at some key domains of public policy in India in a pre-covid world.

Kaushik Basu's piece titled **"Reflections on some developments in Higher Education in India"** goes beyond the realm of economic policies and attempts to understand how development is shaped by a structure of social norms, the right kinds of laws, and how the right kinds of governance structures are more crucial in the economic development of a country than getting economic policies right. One finds the piece very relevant today as many believe a much more socially sensitive understanding of the lives of millions of migrant workers could have avoided the devastating consequences that the lockdown had on their lives.

Rathin Roy's piece **"India's Macro Fiscal Bind: Is Co-operative Federalism a Solution?"** deals with the contours of 'cooperative federalism' and its implications on national and state governments. The author emphasizes the need to provide greater fiscal power to states so that education and health receive greater investment. As the crumbling nature of our health system has been exposed during this pandemic, and the need for greater public investment in health and education being felt more than ever, Rathin Roy's piece provides us a clear argument for policy relevance.

Susrita Roy's piece **"Engagement of the private sector in the Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana: Examining the promise of a watershed moment for Universal Health Coverage"** brings out key evidences and exposes the fault-lines of the current direction of health policy in India. Her observations have gained greater significance at the current juncture

where government-funded insurance schemes like the Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PMJAY) have not been adequately successful in providing care against Covid-19.

Ajay Gautam has analysed two key policy initiatives of the current government and discussed their relevance to the lives of people. His analysis of **Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana** (PMMVY)— a scheme to provide cash assistance to pregnant women and lactating mothers— is of particular relevance. This study critically evaluates the ground realities of the scheme from its implementation to its execution, thereby highlighting the challenges being faced both by the authorities and the beneficiaries. Ajay’s piece on **Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana (PMMY)**, which is aimed to provide financial support to micro/small entrepreneurs (MSEs) by meeting their credit aspirations is of particular importance. The Indian economy faces a tremendous crisis of demand and supply bottlenecks post lockdown, and revival of MSEs is critical in the process of recovery.

Rupsha Mitra and Vivek Patvetnaya’s piece **“Ambient air pollution: overview of evidence for integrated local and global action”** highlights the need to adopt policy indicators that can be mainstreamed across sectors to align a full range of interventions for effective mitigation and to achieve multiple co-benefits related to health and climate security and sustainable development goals.

This publication would not have been possible without numerous contributions from our colleagues. We are particularly indebted to Prof Manini Ojha and Prof Mehreen Mookherjee for taking out the time and patiently reviewing submissions. Active involvement, mentorship and encouragement from Dean Professor R Sudarshan helped us during crucial junctures. Ms Shweta Venkatesh took all the pain to read all the pieces, make language and grammatical changes and also at times suggesting corrections for the content with impeccable efficiency. Our heartfelt thanks to Shweta for being patient with us and responding to our repeated requests with grace. Ms Mani Mala, Manager & Academic Co-ordinator of Jindal School of Government and Public Policy has been forthcoming with support whenever we were in need. Her contributions in organizing transcriptions need special mention. Mr Manoj’s prompt support in designing the issue and Mr Naveen and Mr Durgesh’s support in uploading the content on the website came at a key juncture. We deeply appreciate their efforts.

Enjoy reading. We hope to come back more regularly and bring out interesting policy research.

Thanks and regards

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